

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Gabriel Betancur Velez and I am a long-time resident of New Haven County and a current fourth-year medical student at Yale.

I stand in support of **HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion Of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status**. Expanding access to HUSKY regardless of immigration status is an important step in ensuring our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we need. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 26; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age. If Connecticut wants a future that includes healthy families and a stable, thriving and growing workforce that is ready to meet the needs of our future, Connecticut must ensure that these individuals have access to health coverage.

As a medical student, I have had the honor of volunteering at our student-run clinic, the HAVEN Free Clinic. Our clinic serves only uninsured adults in the Greater New Haven area, and the majority of our patients are undocumented. Through conversations with my patients, I have heard of the significant barriers that they face when attempting to access medical care. From cost and transportation issues to fear due to immigration status, these obstacles disproportionately affect communities of color and immigrant populations. The disparities in outcomes caused by these social determinants of health are a real-life example of the impact of structural racism, and we must do everything we can to correct these inequities. Our community is suffering because there are extremely limited options for obtaining health care in this country without medical insurance. This legislation will greatly support our patients at HAVEN Free Clinic and many others who have been left behind throughout the state of Connecticut.

This matter is also personal to me. Having immigrated from Colombia to Bethany, Connecticut thirteen years ago, this state was extremely welcoming to my family and me. I wish for all immigrants to have a positive experience and feel that they are welcome here and that our entire community cares about everyone's health and well-being.

I strongly support **HB 6616** and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time and attention,

Gabriel Betancur Velez
Yale School of Medicine, Class of 2023